

LOUDLY CALL THE WAKE-UP

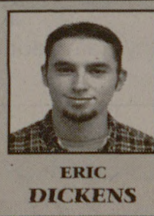
Methods used by crew chiefs to recruit for cut amounts to rude awakening



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

Bonfire traditions unfairly criticized for petty reasons, such as morning wake-up

Eric Dickens



While this builds a unity of sorts for them, freshmen who ignore the crew chiefs while they are enlisting "letterheads" are often looked down upon and called whatever derogatory term that comes to mind.

In the past, crew chiefs have even delved into illegality to encourage students to come to cut.

When they employ petty methods, crew chiefs hurt their own efforts.

Crew chiefs organizing parties where minors can get alcohol is almost traditional in itself, but the zealous Bonfire leaders do not stop there.

According to an Oct. 30, 1997 article in *The Battalion*, to attract students to attend cut, crew chiefs from Dunn Hall two years ago brought a stripper to the site. The Dunn Hall crew chiefs were reprimanded for that stunt, but it is not hard to imagine more undetected instances of Bonfire rules being broken for the sake of bringing more students to cut.

Despite all of this, childishness and disrespect toward others are never so blatantly displayed by crew chiefs as during morning wake-up. If a student is in the hall on weekend mornings during cut, he or she will most likely be

treated to a chorus of obscenity-spewing loudmouths running up and down the halls at 5 a.m. The added bonus comes when the same loudmouths turn on their stereos at the highest positive volume to further eliminate any chance students have at undisturbed sleep.

Do crew chiefs, as they are running down the halls calling students all sorts of insulting names, actually think people who were not planning to go to cut will now be motivated to wake up and join them? Of course not. They are waking up those students who already plan to go to cut. But they do not have to harass other sleeping students in the process.

When residence halls are prevented from collectively organizing cut trips and crew chiefs are stripped of their roles, wake-up will continue in a more civilized and efficient manner.

The people who want to go to cut could leave signs on their doors to be awakened or let crew chiefs know they need to be called at 5 a.m.

Even plain, old-fashioned self-reliance in getting up for cut would seem to get the job done while still respecting the wishes of others.

Crew chiefs are an integral part of Bonfire, and their job is an important one in organizing individual residence hall participation.

But when they employ petty and sometimes illegal encouragement, crew chiefs hinder their own efforts. The crass, childish ways crew chiefs often go about motivating students to attend cut lowers other people's opinions of them and ultimately the great tradition they represent.

Eric Dickens is a junior English major.

Bonfire participants view the final product of their efforts as the culmination of a long semester spent performing difficult tasks with little, if any, appreciation.

Oddly enough, many people in the crowd enjoying "the burn" are the same ones who spent the semester ridiculing Bonfire.

One of the largest student organizations is consistently portrayed as dumb and savage.

Cheap jabs at Bonfire and petty stabs directed at the student volunteers only slow changes that might otherwise be quickly implemented.

Students who possess an actual working comprehension of Bonfire should be allowed the freedom to initiate any alterations, not armchair spectators.

The workhorses of Aggie Bonfire, crew chiefs, are charged with a most difficult duty — motivating volunteers to perform strenuous acts of physical labor.

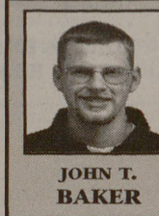
While some mistakes are made, crew chiefs still achieve their goals, even without much outside support.

Underlining most dorm difficulties is a lack of compromise on the part of Bonfire's opposition.

Crew chiefs are too often asked by well-intentioned policies to do things fundamentally detrimental to the completion of Bonfire.

Attacking such a petty aspect of Bonfire as morning wake-ups simply characterizes the ridiculous nature of anti-Bonfire propaganda.

Dorm Bonfire representatives are empowered to wake dorm residents up for cut through a democratic voting process.



JOHN T. BAKER

Resident directors, resident advisers (RAs) and hall council members administer the voting process to assure fairness to all residents.

Residents wishing to be left alone may post an appropriate "Do not disturb" sign in a specified place, or simply on the door. Furthermore, dorm wake-ups are limited to 20 minutes, hardly enough to consider unfair.

RAs even supervise morning wake-up proceedings to assure respect is maintained toward all residents.

Any further restrictions on crew chiefs will damage Bonfire participation.

Any further restrictions forced upon crew chiefs will only further damage participant turnout for Bonfire activities. A prime example of the effects of restricted wake-ups on participant turnout happened in Dunn Hall in 1997.

After the Yellow pot and five crew chiefs lost their Bonfire privileges after being reprimanded for taking a stripper to the cut site, cut wake-up procedures were severely restricted within the dorm. Participant turnout dropped by an estimated 20 percent.

"Numbers may have been more drastically affected by the new limitations had the incident occurred earlier in the year," Andrew Zeve, head crew chief of Dunn Hall said in 1997. For Bonfire leaders, motivation is everything. In motivating students for

cut, timing is everything. If the limitations had been in place at the beginning of the cut season, participant turnout would have been more greatly affected.

Students need to understand that Bonfire volunteers' main goal is the continuance of Bonfire and its traditions. Students also need to rediscover their trust in those who do the work.

Construction is made possible only through innumerable hours of experience, and Bonfire will continue only with student support.

The silent majority must raise their volume to protect and maintain this proud tradition. At one time, students stood united on campus. Now, Texas A&M has students who run to the administration every time some individual's statements get under their thin skin. Blame for the indiscretions of a few participants is often unjustifiably placed upon the whole Bonfire organization.

Perpetually ridiculous accusations and demands against Bonfire will only lead to its eventual demise. After Bonfire is gone, some other cause will fall to the force of students' hyper-sensitivity.

Bonfire will not be dismantled at once. It will die gradually, beginning, for instance, with objections to wake-up practices.

Students should grant Bonfire volunteers the patience, understanding and freedom to safely complete the construction of this Aggie emblem. As students, demand excellence.

As spectators, demand victory. As Bonfire onlookers, enjoy the burn this year, because it might not survive the witch hunts now plaguing its proud builders.

John T. Baker is a junior agricultural development major.

Proposed changes to lottery not worth chance

Jeff Webb



Everyone dreams of hitting the big one, and the Texas State Lottery Commission took a gamble. However, so many of its weekly customers, the Commission has nothing to show for it but empty pockets.

"Don't Mess with Lotto Texas" is the reaction the commission received from concerned citizens to proposed lottery changes. Texas Lottery executive Linda Cloud found herself embroiled in controversy after she proposed adding four balls to the current pool of 50 numbers to lessen chances of a big jackpot. Cloud also proposed more \$5 and \$100 payoffs, which would almost double the number of winning contestants.

But lowering the chance of winning a sizable payoff defeats the purpose for which most people play. The commission should heed the advice of lottery players and create more big-money payoffs to increase sales and reduce the \$5 and \$100 payoffs each week.

The current Lotto Texas system does not have the big payoffs of

multi-state lotteries in other regions (which pool money between several states, making jackpots astronomically high). The thousands of players who wrote to the commission said the way to solve the problem is not to divide the money into smaller winning purses, but to make purses bigger.

Under the current system, a lottery ticket holder has a 1-in-57 chance of cashing in on any prize. The proposed change would lower those odds to 1-in-43, meaning more people would hold winning tickets.

However, the chances of winning any real money — picking at least six numbers correctly — would fall from 1-in-15.8 million to 1-in-25.8 million.

A news release issued by the lottery commission calls the proposed change in jackpot odds "slight." Things are known to be bigger in Texas, but 10 million is hardly a slight change, even in lottery odds.

The proposed action was intended to reverse falling ticket sales and consumer interest in the game, but the state almost drove thousands of players away for good until the changes

were dropped from consideration by the board.

Under the changes proposed, lottery players who match five of the first six numbers, including a bonus seventh ball, would only win \$10,000. If players were looking for this relatively small payout, they could play Cash 5, which pays \$85,000 for hitting on just five of a possible 39 balls. This means

Lotto Texas would offer a smaller payout on tougher odds — not good business practice. There have only been 369 winning lotto tickets for the jackpot since 1992, meaning players know the devastating odds they face for a big score. Creating more ways to win smaller prizes, instead a few ways to

win bigger payoffs, would just dilute the cash pool the prize money is taken from and draw less interest from the boom-or-bust players who make up the majority of Lotto Texas buyers.

Texas should care about interest in the state lottery. Over \$6.9 billion has been generated for the state by the lottery since 1992. About half of the money generated goes into the prize fund to keep people playing for big money, while 15 percent goes toward administration costs and retailer payoffs.

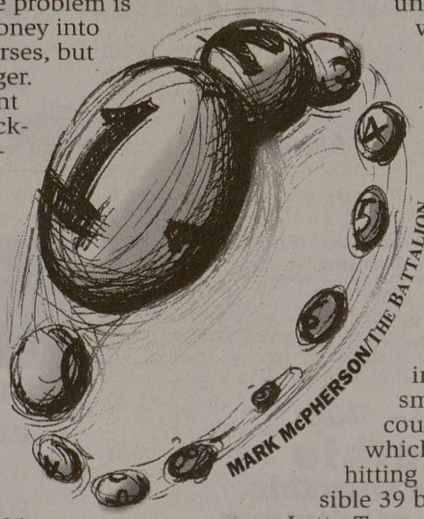
The remaining 35 percent goes to an educational fund for public schools. It is in the best interests of the state of Texas to keep its lottery going strong for a source of income for school programs.

For now, the commission has set up "town meetings" around the state at which concerned players can voice their ideas for better change.

This input will be a better way of determining what the people want for their lottery than having the commission rolling the dice on its own ideas.

After all, craps is not the game around these parts.

Jeff Webb is a senior journalism major.



MARK McPHERSON/THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Workers defend women's clinic

In response to Amber Matchen's Oct. 18 mail call.

As a volunteer at the Planned Parenthood clinic in Bryan, Matchen's letter puzzles me.

Any casual observer of this debate should know abortions are a very small minority of Planned Parenthood's services (only 7 percent).

Most of the women who go to the Bryan clinic are receiving non-surgical services like birth control, AIDS tests or even flu shots.

Members of the Brazos Valley Coalition for Life do not offer alternatives when they scream at women from the sidewalk on Tuesday mornings.

They intimidate women by writing down their license plate numbers, taking their pictures and telling them they will go to hell. I have personally witnessed all of this.

Supposedly, pro-life individuals do not stop at

intimidating the women seeking services. They also threaten the clinic staff.

Posters with the name and picture of the doctor who provides abortion services are frequently posted around the clinic.

Despite these attempts, women and families still have the right to affordable, safe reproductive health care in Brazos County because of the efforts of the Planned Parenthood clinic staff and volunteers.

Amy Hynze
Class of '01
With 31 signatures

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